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New Testament Survey

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New Testament Survey

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BACKGROUNDS

Intertestamental History

To have a full, adequate understanding of the New Testament, one must have a working knowledge of Israel's closing kingdom years, the seventy years of the Babylonian exile, the postcaptivity era, and the period between the testaments. This latter period has sometimes been called the "four hundred silent years" because there was no oral or written revelation communicated directly by God. Between the prediction of Elijah's coming (Mal. 4:5) and the angelic announcement of the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20), however, God was preparing the world for the advent of His Son. In the last two hundred years of Israel's canonical history and the subsequent four-hundred-year interval, many significant political and religious developments occurred. For example, the Sadducees and the Pharisees were very prominent during Christ's earthly ministry, but where did they come from? They are not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. The last historical book, Nehemiah, relates that Persia controlled Palestine, but the Gospels reveal the presence of Rome in Jerusalem. How did this Western empire come to have political influence in the East? Answers to these questions and others similar to them can only be found in the six centuries before Christ.

Babylon (626-539 B.C.)

After the conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria (722 B.C.), Judah continued to function as a single political entity until Babylonian influence began to be felt in Palestine. Immediately after Babylon conquered Egypt at the second battle of Carchemish, Judah came under the political dominion of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (605 B.C.). At this time the first deportation of exiles, including Daniel,

occurred (Dan. 1:1-6). Much of the temple wealth was also confiscated and removed to Babylon. Shortly after, Jehoiakim, king of Judah, rebelled, but he was bound and carried off to Babylon. His son and successor, Jehoiachin, reigned only three months because he likewise rebelled (597 B.C.). At this time the second major deportation took place. Not only was Jehoiachin carried away to Babylon, but also his mother, wives, military consultants, soldiers, and craftsmen (II Kings 24:6-16; II Chron. 36:8-10). The remaining wealth of the temple and palace was removed. A young priest, Ezekiel, was also taken at this time (Ezek. 1:2). Only the poor remained in the land. Nebuchadnezzar then placed Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, on the throne and changed the latter's name to Zedekiah (II Kings 24:17-20). Against the advice of Jeremiah, Zedekiah aligned himself with Egypt in an attempt to overthrow the Babylonian yoke. When Egypt failed to support Judah, the city of Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians after a lengthy, tragic siege. After Zedekiah saw his sons slain, his eyes were blinded, and he was dragged in chains to Babylon. Solomon's temple was then burned down, the walls of the city were destroyed, and the remaining inhabitants were led away in the third major deportation (586 B.C.; II Kings 25:1-21). The temple vessels were broken and carried away. The few people who remained were placed under the governorship of Gedaliah who was later assassinated by members of the royal family (II Kings 25:22-26). The Jewish kingdom which began with Saul about five hundred years before was now over. Henceforth there would not be a royal aspirant to the throne of David until Jesus' offer of Himself to Israel as her king.

The seventy years of exile (605-535 B.C.) gave birth to orthodox Judaism. Since the temple and the sacrificial system had been destroyed, the exiles congregated themselves into assemblies or synagogues for the worship of God, the study of the Old Testament, and fellowship. In the centuries that followed, synagogues sprouted throughout the Mediterranean world wherever the Jews emigrated. They were never designed to become a substitute for the temple. Sacrifices were never offered in them because Jerusalem was the only God-appointed place of sacrifice. When the missionary outreach of the apostles began, these synagogues became strategic preaching centers. Out of them came the first Christian converts, believers who were Jews and Gentile proselytes to Judaism.

The captivity also saw the rise of the scribe. Since the priests could not practice their ministry, they undertook a serious study and copying of the Old Testament Scriptures. The more they copied, the more they learned. Soon they became the "theologians" of orthodox Judaism.

The Exile also produced the Diaspora. Later, when the exiles and their families were permitted to return to the land, many of the Jews chose to remain in Babylon. Whereas Jews were formerly located only in

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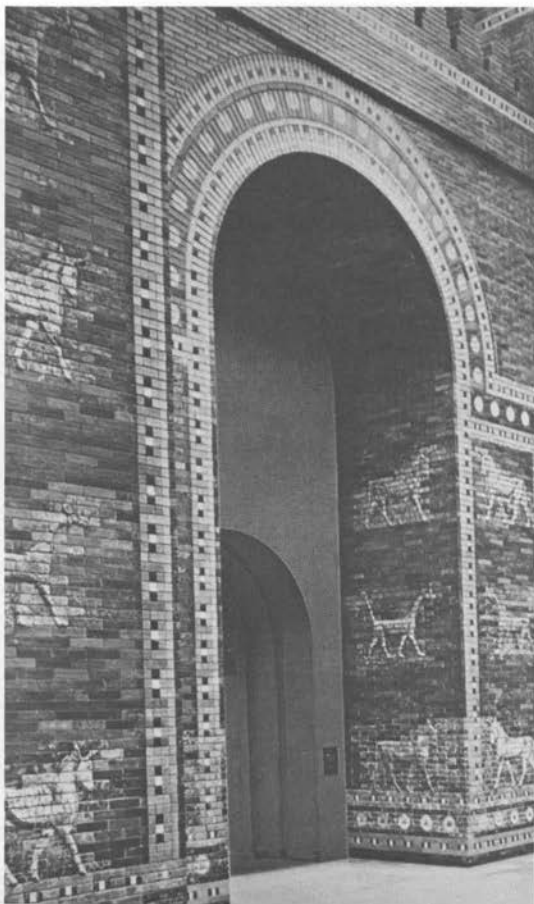
Palestine, the Exile saw the beginning of Jewish residence outside of the land. This takes on significance when one realizes that these converted, Diaspora Jews formed the nucleus of New Testament churches scattered throughout the Roman empire.

Idolatry, the chief cause of divine judgment, came to an abrupt end in the captivity. This sin which had plagued the nation ever since its inception (Exod. 32:15-28) no longer was a part of the national life. Chastisement produced this worthy fruit of repentance.

Persia (539-331 B.C.)

The Jews came under the dominion of the Medo-Persian empire when Cyrus conquered Babylon and Belshazzar in 539-538 B.C. (Dan. 5). Cyrus, once king of Anshan, a tributary to Media, rose to power with his conquest of Media. He then made claim to Assyria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Cappadocia. Later he defeated Lydia, took Greek Asia Minor, and moved eastward, absorbing into his empire Hyrcania, Parthia, Drangiana, Arachosia, Margiana, and Bactria. The Jews found in Cyrus a kind benefactor, however. He issued a decree permitting the exiles to return to Palestine with the express purpose of rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1-4). Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, 42,360 Jews and 7337

The Ishtar Gate of Babylon reconstructed. The structure is housed at the State Museum at Berlin.



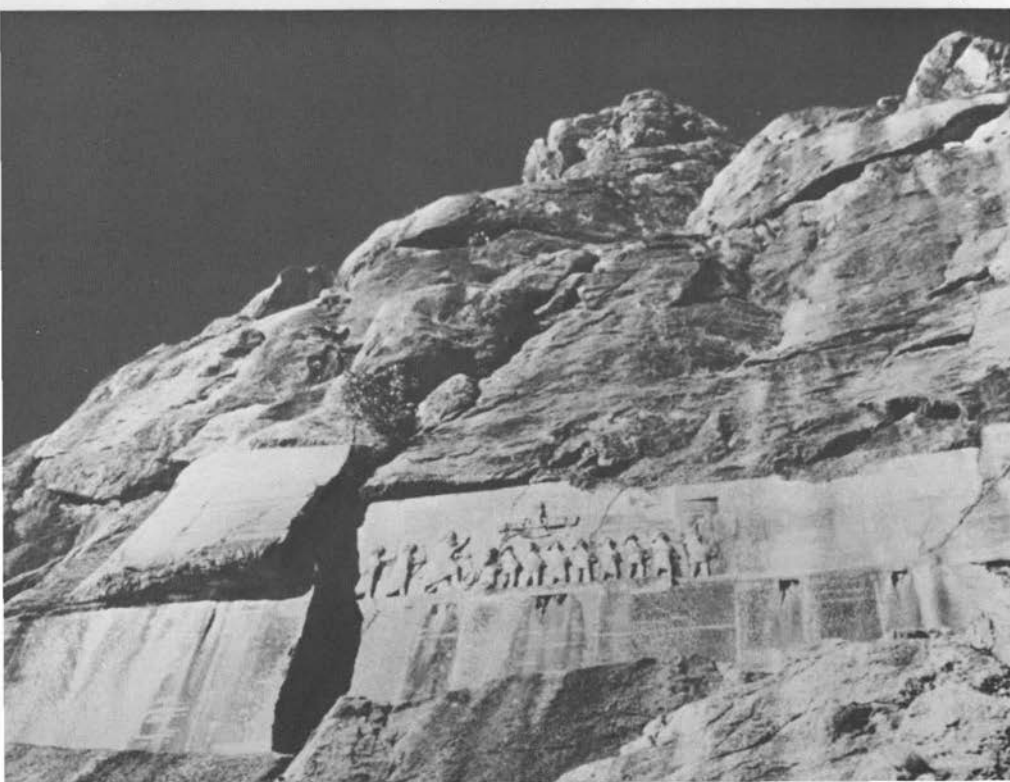
NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

servants returned (Ezra 2:64-65) and laid the foundation of a new temple. When external opposition interrupted the work, labor ceased for the next fifteen years.

In this interval, Cyrus died and was replaced by Cambyses who secretly murdered his brother, Smerdis. Cambyses defeated Egypt and advanced into Ethiopia. When a report came that a usurper, known as Pseudo-Smerdis, had taken the throne, he made haste to return to Persia. On the way back, however, he died. When the army of Cambyses came home, it put to death the usurper and placed Darius I on the throne.

During the reign of Darius, God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to convict the returned exiles of their sin of procrastination. Under the combined leadership of the prophets and Zerubbabel, the people returned to the reconstruction of the temple (Ezra 5-6). When the provincial governors questioned their actions, the Jews appealed to Darius to honor the decree of Cyrus. When Darius discovered the decree in the court records, he not only granted permission to the Jews but he authorized that the work should be subsidized with government funds (Ezra 6:7-12). With this encouragement, the Jews completed the task of rebuilding the temple in 516-515 B.C. This temple, later enlarged and renovated by Herod the Great (John 2:20), stood for the next five centuries; it was the prominent temple of New Testament activities.

On this high mountain ledge, near Bihistun (Bisitun), the Persian ruler Darius the Great had his autobiography carved in rock. The trilingual inscription unlocked the Assyrio-Babylonian system of cuneiform writing.



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Darius, politically ambitious, moved against Thrace, Macedonia, and the Scythians. Defeated by the Greeks at the battle of Marathon, he retreated to the mainland. This battle was significant, however, because it produced the first major encounter between East and West, the Persian empire and the Greek city states. His successor, Xerxes, after putting down rebellions within the empire in Babylon and in Egypt, also moved against Greece and succeeded in taking Athens. However, his fleet was defeated at the battle of Salamis. Xerxes then retreated, leaving the Greeks in control of their own land. In Biblical history, Xerxes is known as Ahasuerus, Esther's husband. Although hostile to the Greeks, through the diplomacy of Esther and Mordecai he proved to be the deliverer of the Jews from the plot of Haman to exterminate all Jews.

His successor, Artaxerxes I, permitted Ezra the scribe to return to Palestine to teach the law to the returned exiles (Ezra 7-10). Shortly after Ezra's return (458-457 B.C.), Nehemiah asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls which were still in a state of disrepair (Neh. 1-2). When it was granted, Nehemiah led an expedition back to Palestine, organized the laborers, and reconstructed the walls of Jerusalem (445-444 B.C.). Then, under the combined leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, a revival broke out. Certain features of the Feast of Tabernacles were reinstituted; confession of sin and separation from the Gentiles occurred; and a covenant was signed, pledging the obedience of the people of God in the instruction of their children, the observance of the Sabbath and the Sabbatical year, and the financial support of the temple (Neh. 8-10). With his work completed, Nehemiah returned to Persia. Upon his second visit to Palestine, he discovered that the people had broken their pledge. Under his supervision the offenders were disciplined (Neh. 13). At this point, the recorded history of the Old Testament ends. The Jews were back in the land with a rebuilt temple and reconstructed walls around Jerusalem. The prophetic era, begun with Moses, was also over. For the next four hundred years, no divinely authenticated prophet proclaimed new, authoritative truth.

History, however, continued. Persian dominion lasted another hundred years until the rise of Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander.

Greece (331-323 B.C.)

Philip of Macedon laid the foundation for the Greek empire. He succeeded where others had failed before him in uniting the Greek city states under a single ruler. Upon his death his ambitious son, Alexander, took over. Alexander looked eastward to the vast areas controlled by the Greeks' ancient enemy, the Persians. Leading his army, he crossed the Hellespont and defeated the Persians at the strategic Granicus River. This victory opened up the entire region of Asia Minor to him. He then

A CHART OF INTERTESTAMENTAL HISTORY

Babylon

Nabopolassar	626-605 B.C.
Nebuchadnezzar	605-562 B.C.
Evil-Merodach	562-560 B.C.
Neriglissar	560-556 B.C.
Labishi-Marduk	556 B.C.
Nabonidus	556-539 B.C.
Belshazzar	539-539 B.C.

Persia

Cyrus	550-530 B.C.
Cambyses	530-522 B.C.
Smerdis (Bardiya)	522-521 B.C.
Darius I	521-486 B.C.
Xerxes I	486-464 B.C.
Artaxerxes I	464-423 B.C.
Darius II	423-404 B.C.
Artaxerxes II	404-359 B.C.
Artaxerxes III	359-338 B.C.
Arses	338-336 B.C.
Darius III	336-331 B.C.

Greece

Philip	359-336 B.C.
Alexander	336-323 B.C.

Ptolemies

Ptolemy I Soter	323-285 B.C.
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	285-246 B.C.
Ptolemy III Evergetes	246-222 B.C.
Ptolemy IV Philopator	222-203 B.C.
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	203-181 B.C.

Seleucidæ

Antiochus III	223-187 B.C.
Seleucus IV Philopator	187-175 B.C.
Antiochus IV Epiphanes	175-164 B.C.

Maccabees-Hasmoneans

Mattathias	166 B.C.
Judas	166-160 B.C.
Jonathan	160-142 B.C.
Simon	142-135 B.C.
John Hyrcanus	135-104 B.C.
Judah Aristobulus	104-102 B.C.
Alexander Jannæus	102- 76 B.C.
Alexandra and Hyrcanus II*	76- 67 B.C.
Aristobulus II	67- 63 B.C.

Roman Influence

Hyrcanus II*	63- 40 B.C.
Antigonus	40- 37 B.C.
Herod the Great	37- 4 B.C.

*Same Person

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encountered and defeated the Persian armies at Issus. Faced with a choice to go either east or south, Alexander advanced southward and gained Phoenicia, Palestine, and Egypt. Tradition states that he spared the city of Jerusalem because Jaddua, the high priest, showed him out of the prophecy of Daniel (ch. 8) that he would conquer Persia. Whether this tradition is historically correct is difficult to determine, but it is a fact that Jerusalem was not destroyed even though other conquered cities were. Alexander then retraced his steps northward, moved east, and conquered the Persians for the third time in the decisive battle of Arbela. This victory opened up the Persian heartland; his army then quickly moved through Babylon and Persia and extended itself as far as India. On the return trip to Greece, Alexander succumbed either through malaria or drunkenness or both. Although Alexander is mainly known as a great military strategist, his main contribution was in spreading the Greek culture and language to the Near East. The Hellenization was so complete that the next six hundred years (300 B.C.—A.D. 300) saw Greek become the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean world. A highly sophisticated language with its many declensions, conjugations, and grammatical technicalities, it was the perfect medium in which the New Testament could be written. Thus, when that time came, the apostles could speak and write in a language that everyone in the Roman world

The site of the grand temple of Apollo, at Delphi, Greece.





Two silver drachmas bearing the image of Alexander the Great.

could understand. This period of the formation of the Greek language is known as the *Koine* period (the Greek word *koine* means "common").

When Alexander died, he left no heir old enough to take over the empire. After seven years of internal struggle, the conquered territory was divided into four sections under the control of four generals (cf. Dan. 8:8, 22): Antigonus took northern Syria and Babylon; Cassander ruled Macedonia; Ptolemy controlled southern Syria and Egypt; and Lysimachus reigned over Thrace and western Asia Minor. In 315 B.C. Ptolemy, Cassander, and Lysimachus formed an alliance to check Antigonus who aspired to be a second Alexander. Ptolemy demanded that Antigonus yield Babylon to Seleucus, the former's general. When Antigonus resisted, he was defeated and Seleucus obtained Babylon by force. This action began the Seleucid dynasty, a family of rulers that eventually ruled the Jews. Later, in 301 B.C., a new alliance of Seleucus, Lysimachus, and Cassander defeated and killed Antigonus. It had been agreed beforehand that Palestine would be assigned to Ptolemy in the event of victory over Antigonus. However, since Ptolemy had not taken part in the fighting, the other three allies decided that the territory should be assigned to Seleucus. Before Seleucus could occupy the land, however, Ptolemy annexed the territory to his Egyptian domain. Thus Seleucus and Ptolemy, who were once friends, became bitter enemies. Their descendants, the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies, continued that hostility and engaged in many wars, with Palestine being the battlefield and the prize of victory.

Ptolemies (323-198 B.C.)

Jews prospered during the Ptolemaic occupation. The absorption of the Grecian culture by a great number of Jews necessitated the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. During the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.), the Septuagint (also known as the LXX) was published. It became the Bible for the Diaspora Jews

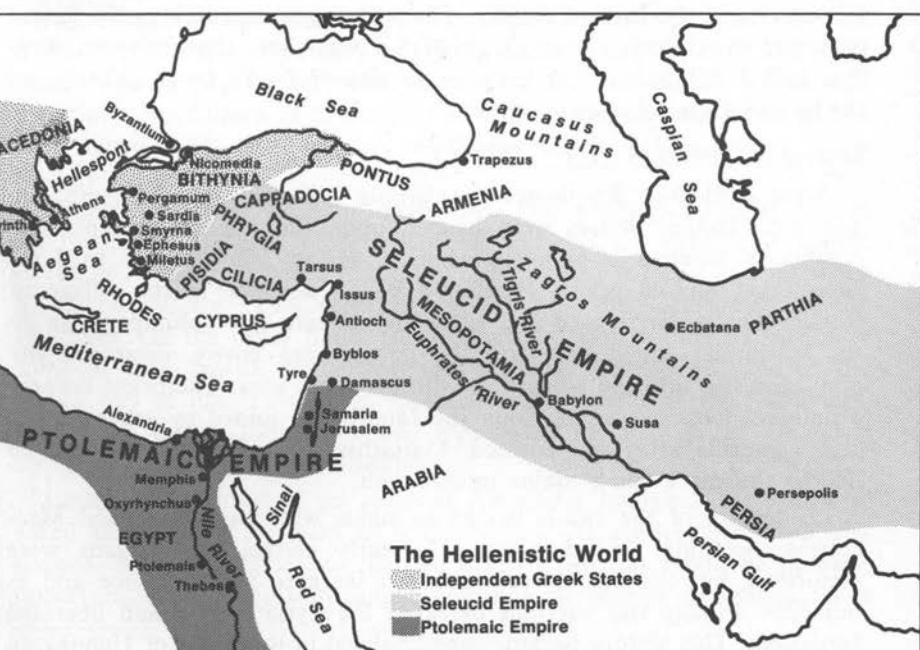
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since they were being gradually weaned away from the Hebrew text. In the New Testament period, it was widely circulated throughout the Mediterranean world, used in the synagogues by both Jews and Gentile proselytes. Therefore, when the early churches, composed mostly of Gentile Christians, were established, they had the authoritative text of the Old Testament in a language they could read immediately. Before the writing of the Gospels and the Epistles, it was the Bible of the young church.

Seleucidae (198-166 B.C.)

Constant battles took place between the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies (275, 245, 240, 219, 217 B.C.). A lengthy war (202-198 B.C.) was climaxed at the battle of Panion. With this victory the Seleucidae finally gained control of Palestine, much to the disfavor of the Jews. During the years of subsequent occupation, the Jews were severely persecuted because they refused to submit to pagan, Hellenizing pressures.

Roman political influence first began to be felt in the East during this time. When Hannibal of Carthage was defeated by the Romans (202 B.C.), he fled eastward and took refuge in the court of Antiochus III. Full of vengeance, Hannibal encouraged Antiochus to invade Greece to



gain more territory. Rome interfered, defeated Antiochus, forced him to withdraw and took his son as a political hostage to Rome.

Twelve years later the son, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was released, returned to Syria, and shortly after was crowned king. Full of ambition, he invaded Egypt, the realm of the Ptolemies. However, Rome again intervened. Pressured to leave Egypt, he took out his rage upon the Jews in Jerusalem. He killed many, prevented others from observing religious rites, and polluted the temple by erecting a pagan altar in its midst and by offering a pig as a blood sacrifice.

Unknown to the Seleucidae, they had stimulated a spirit of nationalism among the Jews. Tired of oppression and years of Gentile dominion, they prayed and conspired to be free. This determination not only produced the Maccabean revolt but permeated Jewish thought into the New Testament era up to the time of Bar-Cochba (A.D. 135). Among the orthodox developed a longing for a military, political messiah who would smash the Gentile war machines. This is why so many were disenchanted with Jesus' teachings and actions.

Another significant development of this era was the growth of Antioch in Syria in population and influence. As the capital of the Seleucidae empire, it prospered. By the time of Jesus, it had become the third largest city in the Roman empire. The first major outreach of the gospel occurred in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26); it was there that believers were first called "Christians." It became the site of Paul's home church and the base of his missionary operations.

Maccabees (166-135 B.C.)

After Antiochus Epiphanes' intolerable pollutions of the temple in 168 B.C., further abuses were heaped upon the Jews. The deplorable conditions reached a pinnacle when a Syrian official tried to force Mattathias, an old priest, to offer a pagan sacrifice in the village of Modin. The priest refused and when an apostate Jew volunteered to do so, Mattathias killed him and the government envoy, destroyed the altar, and fled into the wilderness with his three sons. The priest became a national hero overnight. Soon the family was joined by other zealots and a guerilla army was formed. Mattathias died shortly after, but he had lit the spark for a major insurrection.

Leadership of the rebels passed to Judas who was nicknamed Maccabeus, meaning "the hammer." In early clashes the Syrians were victorious, but the zealots continued to increase in experience and in numbers. Finally the guerillas defeated the Syrian army and liberated Jerusalem. This victory became memorialized in the Feast of Hanukkah, or the Feast of Lights. The city was later besieged by the Syrians, but an offer of peace was extended to the Jews because the Syrians were

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concerned about another enemy that was marching toward their capital, Antioch. However, traitors developed within the Jewish ranks, and civil war broke out once again. This time Judas died in battle and was replaced by Jonathan, his brother.

Both the Jews and the Syrians were marked by political intrigue. There was much inner rivalry as well as visible battles. Finally, through diplomacy Jonathan became the ruling high priest in Judea and a member of the Syrian nobility. Conflict persevered, however, until Simon, Jonathan's brother, secured a treaty with Rome (139 B.C.) and arranged for the granting of political freedom to the Jews by Demetrius II, an aspirant to the Seleucid throne. Simon then gained for himself and his family official recognition as the high priestly order. This act legitimized a new dynasty, a hereditary high priesthood that came to be known as the Hasmoneans.¹ Political power thus came to be invested in the priests. This dual role (civil-religious) continued and caused the priests to become wealthy, powerful men. With their rise, the royal family of David sank to a new low so that by the time of the New Testament, its members were obscure and insignificant (e.g., Joseph the carpenter).

Hasmoneans (135-63 B.C.)²

The death of Simon, the last son of Mattathias, ended the Maccabean era of struggle; the ascent of John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, marked the beginning of the dynasty of Hasmonean ruling priests. The next hundred years of political freedom were marred by jealousy, greed, and suspicion. The failure of the family to rule itself was manifested in the civil disorder and the military weakness which eventually led to a Roman takeover.

During the reign of John Hyrcanus, two religious-political parties emerged. The Hasidim represented the conservative wing who wished to retain Jewish religious and national liberty and to resist the influence of Greek culture. This separatist group was the forerunner of the Pharisees. On the other hand, the Hellenizers were willing to surrender some of their Jewish distinctives to gain some desired qualities of the Greek way of life. This group matured into the sect of the Sadducees. Before his death, John Hyrcanus repudiated his Pharisaical affiliation and declared himself to be a Sadducee.

Later, at the outset of the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, the Pharisees asked the Syrians for help in overthrowing Alexander and were victorious. When the Pharisees realized that the Syrians might be political opportunists and that they might continue to occupy Jerusalem, they

1. Named after Hasmon, the great, great grandfather of Mattathias.
2. The division between the Maccabees and the Hasmoneans is arbitrary. They can be combined into a single period or kept separate.

repented of their initial action. Thinking that Alexander and the Sadducees had been punished enough, they joined forces with Alexander to drive out the Syrians. However, Alexander, bitter over the initial Pharisaical conspiracy, retaliated. He captured the leaders of the rebellion and crucified eight hundred before the Sadducees at a victory banquet. Tradition states that he instructed his wife to dismiss his Sadducean advisors after his death and to reign with the aid of the Pharisees.

Both Alexandra and her son, Hyrcanus II, favored the Pharisees when they assumed control. The Pharisees, crying for vengeance for what Alexander had done, succeeded in getting the civil officials to put to death many of the Sadducees. The rule of Hyrcanus II was brief because his brother Aristobulus II conspired with the Sadducees for his removal. When his mother died, Hyrcanus II fled for his life and found refuge in the house of Aretas, the king of the Nabatean Arabs.

Roman Influence (63-4 B.C.)

In exile Hyrcanus II became acquainted with Antipater, an Idumean, whose son became Herod the Great. Antipater persuaded Hyrcanus II that he had been unjustly deposed and deprived of his hereditary rights by his younger brother. He informed Hyrcanus II that the latter could be restored to the ruling high priesthood by a movement of the army of the Nabatean Arabs against Jerusalem. Hyrcanus II agreed and started back to the Jewish capital. At this time Rome, which had observed the political strife from a distance, intervened, decided in favor of Hyrcanus II, defeated Aristobulus II, and restored Hyrcanus II to the priestly office. Thus, Antipater was introduced to Jewish political life through Rome and Hyrcanus II. The influence of his family in the politics of Palestine continued for the next four generations. Antipater actually became the chief counselor and the real power behind the throne.

Antigonus, the son of the deposed Aristobulus II, later conspired with the Parthians to capture Jerusalem. When he was made king and priest, young Herod, the son of Antipater, fled to the city of Rome. There he won the favor of Mark Antony who conferred upon him the title of "the King of the Jews." With Roman support Herod returned to Jerusalem, drove out the Parthians, and established himself as the political ruler of Palestine. The Hasmonean priesthood that had exercised civil power for one hundred years lost it when Herod came to the throne and never regained it. Although the priests had much power among the Jewish populace, the iron hand of Rome was there to stay.

The constant jealousy of the Hasmonean priests, the struggle between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and intervention of Gentiles (Syrians, Parthians, Idumeans, and Romans) created a genuine spirit of unrest among the people. They longed for a person to lead them to peace and

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freedom. Into this world Jesus came (Gal. 4:4). It is no wonder that Herod and all of Jerusalem were troubled when they heard the prophetic question of the Magi (Matt. 2:2).

First Century History

The Mediterranean world in the time of Christ and the apostles was a Roman world. The empire extended from Babylon in the east to Spain in the west and from northern Europe to north Africa. Ever since 265 B.C. when Rome gained control of Italy, it had sought to extend its political influence. When it destroyed Hannibal and the Carthaginian empire, it absorbed Spain and northern Africa. Moving toward the east, through more wars and voluntary surrenders, it annexed Macedonia, Achaia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Judea. The northern border was extended with the conquest of Gaul.

Rome did not superimpose a uniform governmental procedure upon its conquered territories. All areas were naturally subject to the emperor and to the Roman armies, but many localities were permitted to govern their own affairs as long as they did not violate Roman sovereignty or directives. For example, there was fear in Ephesus over the legality of the town meeting called by the angry silversmiths (Acts 19:35-41).

An ancient Roman-built road, a short distance west of Jerusalem.



NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

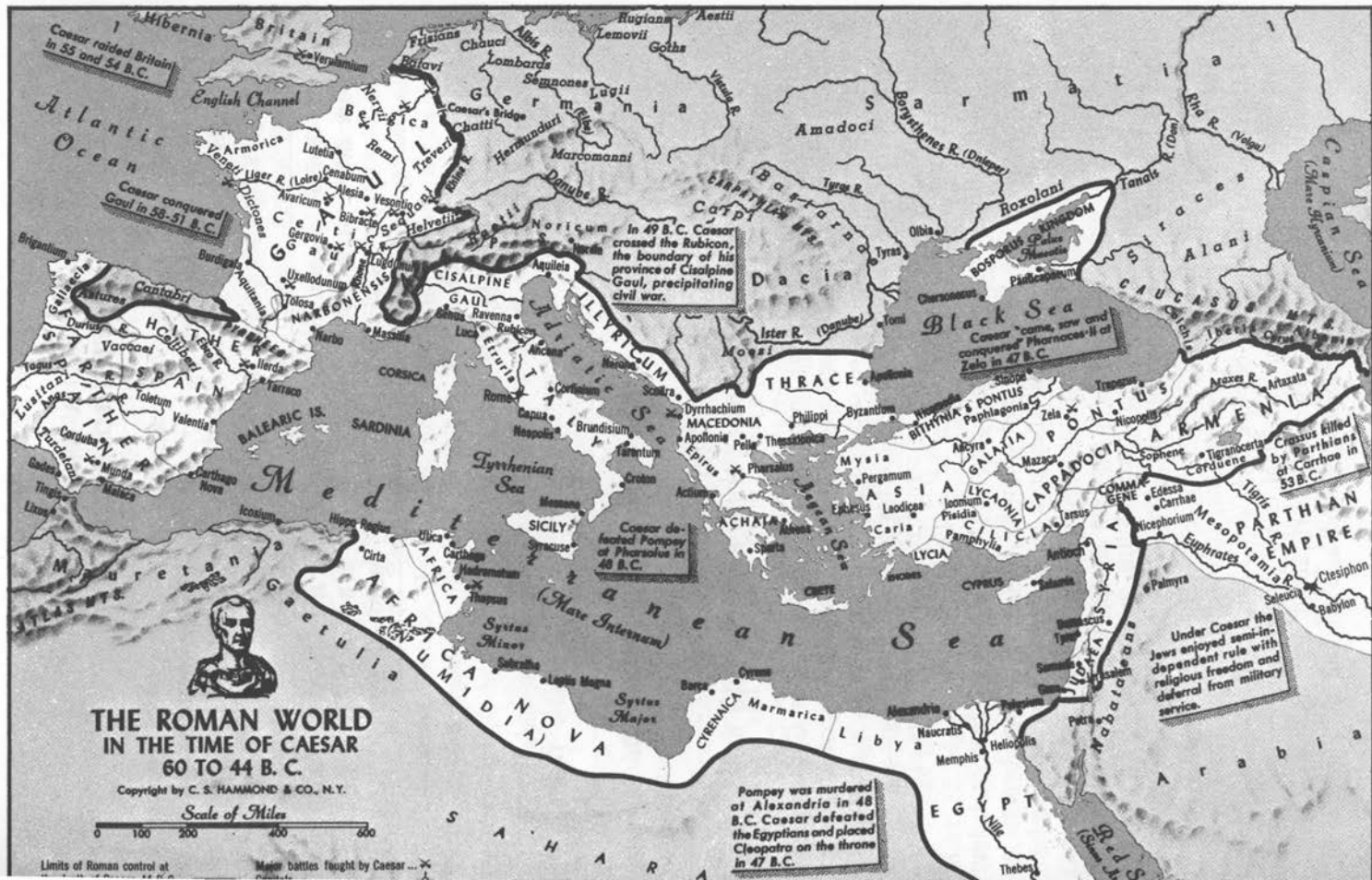
If such meetings were suspected by the Romans as the beginnings of insurrection, they would be put down by force.

Conquered areas were generally organized into provinces. These are mentioned in the New Testament: Cilicia (Acts 6:9), Cyprus (Acts 13:4), Pamphylia (Acts 13:13), Bithynia (Acts 16:7), Macedonia (Acts 16:9), Asia (Acts 20:4), Lycia (Acts 27:5), Illyricum (Rom. 15:19) or Dalmatia (II Tim. 4:10),³ Spain (Rom. 15:24), Achaia (Rom. 15:26), Galatia (Gal. 1:2), Syria (Gal 1:21), Judea (Gal. 1:22), Pontus (I Peter 1:1), and Cappadocia (I Peter 1:1). These provinces were ruled in two different ways. Proconsuls (Acts 13:7; 18:12), who were responsible to the Roman senate, ruled over those areas where the inhabitants were passive and basically submissive to Roman law. Those provinces that were regarded to be troublesome and possible breeding places for rebellion (e.g. Judea) were ruled by governors called procurators, propraetors, or prefects. Proconsuls gained and kept their positions by annual appointment and renewal; procurators were assigned directly by the emperor and kept their offices as long as the emperor wanted them there.

When New Testament history began, Caesar Augustus was the Roman emperor (Luke 2:1). He had survived a struggle of rivals to gain that position. His reign was marked by political, military, social, and religious reforms. His importance to students of the Gospels lies in the fact that he issued the decree that forced Joseph to take the pregnant Mary to

A CHART OF FIRST CENTURY ROMAN EMPERORS		
<i>Dates</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Scriptures</i>
30 B.C.—A.D. 14	Augustus	Luke 2:1
A.D. 14-37	Tiberius	Luke 3:1
A.D. 37-41	Caligula	
A.D. 41-54	Claudius	Acts 11:28; 18:2
A.D. 54-68	Nero	Acts 25:10; 28:19
A.D. 68	Galba	
A.D. 69	Otho	
A.D. 69	Vitellius	
A.D. 69-79	Vespasian	
A.D. 79-81	Titus	
A.D. 81-96	Domitian	
A.D. 96-98	Nerva	
A.D. 98-117	Trajan	

3. Two designations for the same province.



**THE ROMAN WORLD
IN THE TIME OF CAESAR
60 TO 44 B. C.**

Copyright by C. S. HAMMOND & CO., N. Y.

Scale of Miles

0 100 200 300 400 500

Limits of Roman control at

Major battles fought by Caesar ...

60 B.C.

In 49 B.C. Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the boundary of his province of Cisalpine Gaul, precipitating civil war.

Caesar defeated Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 B.C.

Pompey was murdered at Alexandria in 48 B.C. Caesar defeated the Egyptians and placed Cleopatra on the throne in 47 B.C.

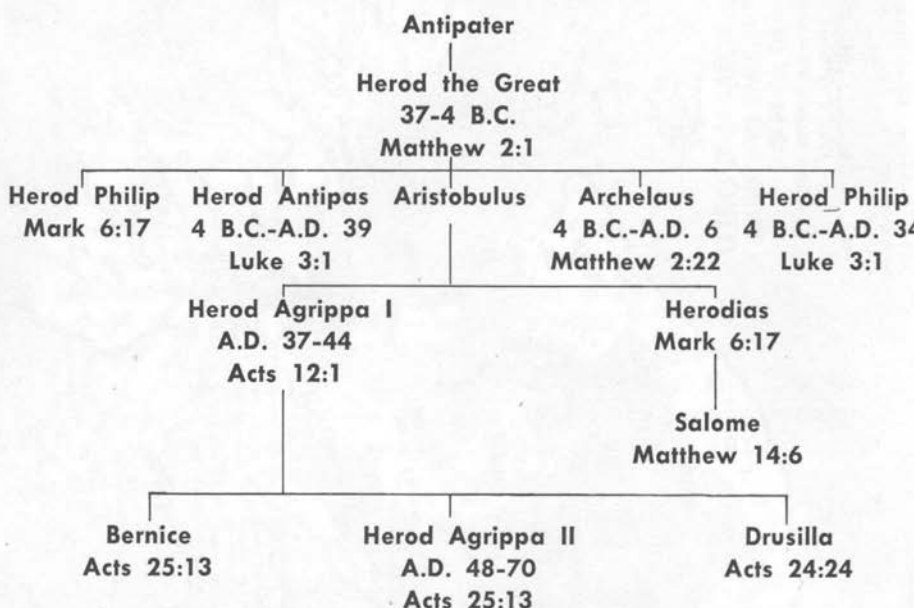
Caesar "came, saw and conquered" Pharnaces II of Zela in 47 B.C.

Crassus killed by Parthians at Carrhae in 53 B.C.

Under Caesar the Jews enjoyed semi-independent rule with religious freedom and deferral from military service.

NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

A CHART OF THE HERODIAN DYNASTY*



**Only those names mentioned in the Bible are listed here.*

Bethlehem where Jesus was born. This demonstrates how God can use the decisions of unsaved men to accomplish the fulfillment of His word (cf. Mic. 5:2). The decree ordered that all enter their names on a census roll which would later be used for taxation. To placate the Jews, permission was granted to them to return to their tribal seats of government rather than to Roman seats of authority.

At this time Herod the Great ruled as the King of the Jews in Judea (37-4 B.C.). Given that title and office by Mark Antony, he became a shrewd politician, switching his allegiance to Augustus when the downfall of Antony and Cleopatra became evident. A ruthless person, Herod murdered anyone who dared to question or to remove his authority. Included among his victims were: Aristobulus, a brother-in-law; Joseph, his wife's uncle; Mariamne, his wife; Alexandra, his mother-in-law; and three of his sons. In order to appease the Jews, he enlarged and beautified the temple of Zerubbabel, a project that involved forty-six years (John 2:20). However, he never became a genuine Jewish proselyte; his actions were totally political. When the Magi came west to worship the infant Messiah, they inquired at Herod's court about His location (Matt. 2:1-23). Full of jealous suspicion, Herod also wanted to find Him in

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order to destroy Him. He may have thought that the baby was born to the deposed Hasmonean clan or possibly to the insignificant royal family of David. When the wise men failed to return, in his rage he declared the decree that all male infants under two years of age in the environs of Bethlehem should be killed. Joseph, warned about Herod's animosity, then took Mary and the infant Jesus to escape the jurisdiction of Herod.

At the death of Herod, a struggle for power among his heirs erupted, insurrections by the Jews occurred, and Jewish pressure against Rome for political autonomy developed. Augustus decided that Archelaus, son by Malthace, should be made the ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. His full brother, Herod Antipas, was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Herod Philip, son by Cleopatra, was recognized as the tetrarch of Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis, regions northeast of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee.

When Joseph heard that Herod the Great was dead, he returned to Nazareth in Galilee although he feared the wrath of Archelaus as much as that of his father (Matt. 2:22). The Jews so reacted to the reign of Archelaus (4 B.C.—A.D. 6) that they succeeded in forcing Augustus to remove him from that position and to replace him with a procurator, Coponius. The next twenty-five-year segment of history was not recorded in the New Testament.

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea, and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness (Luke 3:1-2).

These verses identify the main rulers during the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. Although Tiberius was not directly involved in the life of Jesus, his presence and power were felt (Matt. 22:17, 21; Mark 12:14, 16, 17; Luke 3:1; 20:22, 24, 25; 23:2; John 19:12, 15). When the Pharisees and the Herodians tried to trick Jesus with the question about the payment of tribute, He replied: "Render therefore unto Caesar [Tiberius] the things which are Caesar's . . ." (Matt. 22:21). One of the accusations made against Jesus before Pilate by the Jews was that He refused to pay taxes to Tiberius (Luke 23:2). The Jews strongly asserted that if Pilate released Jesus he would be the enemy of Caesar and subject to punishment (John 19:12, 15).

On the other hand, Herod Antipas was inseparably connected with the Gospel period activities (Matt. 14:1, 3, 6; Mark 6:14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22; 8:15; Luke 3:1, 19; 8:3; 9:7, 9; 13:31; 23:7, 8, 11, 12, 15). He ruled those areas, Galilee and Perea, where Jesus grew from childhood to maturity and where He performed most of His miracles. Jesus

nicknamed Herod "that fox" (Luke 13:32). It was Herod who beheaded John the Baptist at the request of his adulterous wife Herodias. Later, when he heard about Jesus' ministry, in his fear and superstition he concluded that Jesus had to be John the Baptist resurrected from the dead. Jesus and Herod Antipas never met until Pilate sent Christ to Herod because Christ was from Galilee, Herod's jurisdiction. Antipas hoped that Jesus would perform a miracle to satisfy his curiosity, but when Jesus did nothing and remained silent, Herod sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate gained immortal notoriety through the trials of Jesus held before him. Born in Seville, Spain, he lived in Caesarea where he was appointed procurator of Judea (A.D. 26-36). During the Jewish feasts, he went to Jerusalem to supervise personally the peace. The Jews disliked him because he had robbed the temple treasury and had used the funds to build an aqueduct to bring water into the city. Various revolts broke out against him; each time he retaliated by killing off some Jews (cf. Luke 13:1). At the time of Jesus' trial, he was under investigation by Roman authorities. Subsequently, he was banished to Gaul by Caligula; there he committed suicide. In addition to references to him in the records of the four Gospel writers, he is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28; I Tim. 6:13). Along with

The replica of the theater inscription that includes the name of Pontius Pilate. The original, discovered at Caesarea, was taken to Jerusalem for protective purposes.



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A CHART OF FIRST CENTURY PROCURATORS OF JUDEA

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
A.D. 6-10	Coponius	Luke 3:1; 23:1
A.D. 10-13	M. Ambivius	
A.D. 13-15	Annius Rufus	
A.D. 15-26	Valerius Gratus	
A.D. 26-36	Pontius Pilate	
A.D. 36-38	Marcellus	
A.D. 38-41	Maryllus*	
A.D. 44-46	Cuspius Fadus	
A.D. 46-48	Tiberius Alexander	
A.D. 48-52	Ventidius Cumanus	
A.D. 52-59	M. Antonius Felix	Acts 23, 24 Acts 24:27
A.D. 59-61	Porcius Festus	
A.D. 61-65	Albinus	
A.D. 65—Destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70)	Gessius Florus	
Destruction of Jerusalem— A.D. 72	Vettulenus Cerialis	
A.D. 72-75	Lucilius Bassus	
A.D. 75-86	M. Salvienus Flavius Silva	
A.D. 86	Pompeius Longinus	

***Herod Agrippa I ruled over Judea in A.D. 41-44.**

Herod Antipas, the Romans, and the Jews, he was held morally and legally responsible for the death of the innocent Jesus (cf. Acts 4:27).

Early apostolic ministry (Acts 1-12) occurred during the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, the Judean governorships of Pilate, Marcellus, and Maryllus, and the dominion of both Herod Antipas and Herod Agrippa I. When Antipas was banished to Gaul by Caligula, the former's kingdom was given to Agrippa. Earlier, Caligula had given the tetrarchy of Philip to the favored Agrippa. When Caligula was murdered, Agrippa supported Claudius and for this favor was granted the territories of Judea and Samaria (A.D. 41-44). Thus he ruled over the same territory that once belonged to Herod the Great. Agrippa seemed to be a sincere Jewish proselyte. He opposed all attempts to impose pagan idolatry upon the Jews and became the first political ruler to oppress Christianity (Acts 12:1-25). He killed the apostle James, the brother of John, imprisoned Peter, and planned to murder him after the Passover feast. After an angel released Peter, Agrippa in his anger killed the guards.

Because of his persecution and blasphemous pride, God smote him with an incurable disease.

The missionary activities of Paul (Acts 13-21) happened during the reigns of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) and Nero (A.D. 54-68). During the rule of Claudius, a great famine occurred in the Roman empire (Acts 11:28). This event caused the church at Antioch to send financial relief to the church at Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas. Later, in his zeal to reinstitute the ancient religion to Roman society, Claudius issued a decree forcing all Jews to leave the city of Rome. This caused Aquila and Priscilla to leave Rome and to move to Corinth where they came in contact with Paul (Acts 18:1-3). Although the emperor Nero was not mentioned by his proper name, he was referred to as "Caesar" (Acts 17:7; 25:8, 10, 11, 12, 21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19; Phil. 4:22) and "king" (I Peter 2:13, 17). In these years (A.D. 41-64), the Christian was able to evangelize and to mature without any official, imperial suppression or persecution.

When Paul was wrongfully arrested in Jerusalem for an alleged violation of temple worship (Acts 21:17-40), he was able to give defenses or apologies of his Christian beliefs to Herod Agrippa II, the Roman procurators Felix and Festus, and Nero himself (Acts 23:23—28:31). With the death of Agrippa I, Judea reverted to rule by assigned procurators: Fadus (A.D. 44-46), Alexander (A.D. 46-48), Cumanus (A.D. 48-52), Felix (A.D. 52-59), and Festus (A.D. 59-61). After Paul was arrested, he was sent to Caesarea, the main Roman headquarters of Palestine, where he was imprisoned and where he appeared before Felix. The Jews charged Paul with insurrection tendencies (Acts 24:2-9), but the apostle formally denied them (Acts 24:10-23). Later Paul gave a strong witness to Felix and his wife Drusilla, one of the daughters of Herod Agrippa I. Felix had frequent contacts with Paul, hoping that the apostle would give him bribery money in order to effect a release (Acts 24:24-26). After two years of imprisonment at Caesarea, Paul was able to give another defense of his convictions to Festus, Felix's successor, when formal charges by the Jews against him were renewed (Acts 25:1-7). In order to avoid a fixed trial at Jerusalem, Paul exercised his rights as a Roman citizen and asked to be tried by Nero (Acts 25:9-12). Later Paul reiterated his defense and appeal before Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice who came to visit Festus (Acts 25:13—26:32). Both Festus and Agrippa agreed that Paul could have been released if he had not made a formal appeal to Caesar. Agrippa's dominion at this time included parts of Galilee and Perea and the former tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias.

Paul had two direct encounters with Nero. Paul's appeal took him to Rome where he spent two years under house arrest (Acts 28:16-31).



This panel on the Arch of Titus, in Rome, shows Roman soldiers carrying off furnishings from the temple at Jerusalem. The scene records the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under the emperor Titus in A.D. 70. (See also page 323.)

Since Paul had not violated any Roman civil decree, he was acquitted and released. Later, when a fire destroyed a large section of Rome (A.D. 64), Nero blamed it on the Christians who believed in a future destruction of the world by fire. He arrested and murdered many Christians at this time, including Paul and Peter. This was the first official imperial persecution.

In the closing years of Nero's reign, the Jewish war against the Romans broke out (A.D. 66-73). Vespasian, a Roman general, in order to suppress the rebellion, besieged the city of Jerusalem. While this was taking place, a revolt broke out in Rome. Nero was overthrown and killed. Civil war followed, with a rapid succession of emperors being assassinated: Galba (A.D. 68), Otho (A.D. 69), and Vitellius (A.D. 69). Finally, the army of Vespasian killed Vitellius and made the general their emperor. When Vespasian left Jerusalem, his son Titus continued the siege and finally destroyed the city and the temple in A.D. 70. The Jewish War ended in A.D. 73 with the final conquest of Masada.

New Testament history is basically silent about the latter third of the first century. The last living apostle, John, was finally banished to Patmos by the emperor Domitian in the second major imperial persecution (Rev. 1:9). This is the last historical allusion. The New Testament, although written against a historical background, was not designed to become a textbook of history. The authors referred to civil authorities

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and events only when they made a positive contribution to an understanding of the activities of both Christ and the apostles.

Socio-Economic World

Class Structure

In the Roman world there was a great gulf between the rich and the poor. The wealthy consisted of the political and ruling families and the landowners who controlled public lands, bought private acreage at a low price from the financially destitute, and exploited conquered territories. The middle class was almost nonexistent. Some craftsmen thrived (Acts 18:3; 19:24), but most middle-bracket people soon became poor, dependent upon public welfare. The poor were everywhere. Without the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, they were driven to lives of crime (cf. Luke 10:30; Eph. 4:28).

It has been estimated that the majority of the Roman world consisted of slaves. They became such by conquest, birth to slave parents, or inability to pay debts. Slaves came from all strata of society: rich and poor, male and female, and learned and ignorant. Because of the great supply, most slaves were inhumanely treated; they were looked upon as things, objects of possession to be sold, bought, and killed at will, instead of as human beings. However, there were some warm, considerate slave-master relationships. Some slaves were given wages so that they could later purchase their freedom; others were released directly by the will of the master out of love and compassion. Many of the early Christian converts came out of the slave class. Throughout the Epistles can be found instructions as to how Christian slaves and Christian masters should conduct themselves (I Cor. 7:21-22; 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:11; 3:22—4:1; I Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9; Philem.; I Peter 2:18-25). The apostles never attacked nor defended the institution of public slavery; rather, they addressed themselves only to Christians who were directly involved. The concepts of redemption from bondage to sin and of equality in Christ, however, provided embryonic patterns for the eventual release of slaves by Christian masters.

Although slavery was widely practiced in the Old Testament era, it had practically disappeared from Jewish life by the first century. Most Jews in Palestine were free and poor. They made their living by farming, fishing, herding, and various crafts (e.g., pottery making, carpentry). The rich aristocracy was composed of the families of the priests and rabbis. Their major income came from the control of the lucrative temple commerce (John 2:13-17; Matt. 21:12-16). They exchanged Gentile coin for Jewish shekels for a fee and at a rate in their favor; they sold animals and birds for sacrificial use; they inspected the animals for a fee before sacrifice; and they received kickbacks from those who

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operated these concessions in the temple area. Wealth was looked upon as a sign of divine favor and inner spirituality, but Christ shocked both the rich and the poor with His repudiation of that assumption (Matt. 6:19-24; Luke 16:13-31; 18:18-30).

Languages

Because of Alexander's conquests, the Roman occupation of the Mediterranean world, and the constant migration of people, most individuals were bilingual or multilingual. In the midst of many languages and dialects (Acts 2:4-11), four major tongues emerged. Latin was spoken only by native Romans and key political subjects. It was used by lawyers, authors, and poets, mainly in the western section of the Roman empire. Its usage never filtered down to the ordinary man. The language most spoken and read throughout the Mediterranean area was Greek. Archaeologists have uncovered innumerable papyrus documents and fragments showing its usage in letters, business affairs, and mundane matters. In Palestine and throughout the Near East, Aramaic was very popular. Jesus doubtless spoke it (cf. Matt. 27:46). Hebrew was no longer spoken and read by the average Jew; the orthodox, including the rabbis of the Pharisaical order, still embraced its usage. The apostles were probably bilingual (Greek and Aramaic) with the exception of Paul who because of his training must have been able to read Hebrew (Acts 21:37; 22:2). Since there was such a language mix, public documents had to be written in several languages in order to reach all of the people. This is why the crime of Jesus, written as a superscription over His head, was inscribed in three languages (John 19:20).

Education

Education was private, not public. The families that could afford it either hired a teacher or bought an educated slave to serve as a tutor for the children in the family. Instruction was given in homes or in private schools (Acts 19:9). Paul used the concept of the tutor or "schoolmaster" (*paidagogos*, Greek) as an educational metaphor to prove that regenerated believers were no longer under the supervision of the law (Gal. 3:24—4:5). When a child reached an appointed age (usually twenty-one), he became an adult with full acceptance of the responsibilities and privileges pertaining thereto. Until that day the child, even though destined for rulership, was under the discipline of the tutor. Later, some education was taken by youths of rich families at famous Greek universities (e.g. Athens, Tarsus, Alexandria). In the early years of formal education, the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics were gained; later, attention was given to speech, law, philosophy, and literature.

Jewish education differed somewhat. The main textbook was the Old

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Testament; Jewish youths read, recited, and copied it. Less orthodox families exposed their children to some pagan literature. Wealthy families sent their male children to study with famous rabbis. Paul left his home in Tarsus and studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Emphasis upon earning a living by using one's hands accompanied the intellectual pursuits. For instance, Paul, although extremely learned, could make tents to support himself (Acts 18:3). He no doubt learned this as a lad in his hometown either from his father or a close friend.

Religions

Gentile

Idols and temples to the pantheon of Greek-Roman gods still were in vogue in New Testament times. In Athens Paul became burdened when he saw a "city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). In order not to offend any god that might have been overlooked, the Greeks had even constructed an altar with this inscription: "To the Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). These devotees believed that the gods could dwell among men. When Paul healed the cripple at Lystra, the pagans thought that

The Parthenon at Athens.



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he was Mercury and that Barnabas was Jupiter (Acts 14:8-18) and almost offered animal sacrifices to them. Later at Malta when Paul was not affected by the bite of a poisonous snake, the inhabitants believed him to be a god (Acts 28:1-6). The city of Ephesus identified patriotism with worship of its distinctive goddess, Diana, in the temple dedicated to her (Acts 19:23-41). Some of the early converts turned from such pagan idolatry to the living God (I Thess. 1:9).

Emperor worship was part of the state religion of Shintoism in Japan before the Second World War. Patriotism was manifested in total obedience to him. The refusal to worship Hirohito was looked upon not as a matter of religious conscience, but as an issue of treason. The same situation had its beginnings in the Roman empire during the first century. Several emperors (Caligula, Nero, and Domitian) tried to ascribe deity to themselves with limited success. Some rulers were deified at death. Such worship of the Caesars, either living or dead, was more political than religious. It fostered loyal allegiance on the part of the subjects. Most polytheistic pagans had no problem in adding another deity, but Christians could not participate. They could not call any man "God," "Savior," or "Lord." These titles belonged only to the triune God of the Scriptures. For this reason, some imperial persecution came to them during the days of Nero, but the real pressure did not arrive until the second century when they were exposed to severe martyrdoms by the Roman populace. There is no reference in Scripture to the worship of the emperor and/or state.

The influence of the occult was strong then. All men, both civilized and barbaric, were basically superstitious. These fears and beliefs gave rise to the use of means to contact the supernatural world of demons and bodiless human spirits, to ascertain the future, and to control their destinies. Astrology, magic, exorcism (casting out demons by a secret formula), augury (predicting the future by an examination of the inner organs of sacrificed animals or by observation of bird migration), and necromancy (consulting the spirits of dead men) all fascinated and gripped the minds of unregenerate men. Both Israel and the church were warned against involvement with such satanic practices (Deut. 18:9-14; I Cor. 10:20-21; Eph. 5:11-12). Simon of Samaria, a professed convert, had been involved in sorceries and witchcraft (Acts 8:9-24). Paul inflicted blindness upon Elymas, a sorcerer, and identified him as a "child of the devil" when the latter opposed the apostle's ministry (Acts 13:6-11). Paul cast a spirit of divination out of a woman who was being used by her masters to gain money through fortune telling (Acts 16:16-18). Jewish exorcists tried to imitate Paul by casting out demons in the name of Christ and failed (Acts 19:13-17). Many Ephesian converts once involved in the occult brought their magical books and arts

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and burned them publicly, even though they were expensive, as a testimony to others (Acts 19:19).

Many pagan intellectuals had become thoroughly disenchanted with their religious heritage and had moved into philosophical speculation. Paul encountered such at Mars Hill in Athens. Luke reports: "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Although these erudite scholars had the time, money, and intelligence to engage in such pursuits, the average pagan in the home, farm, or marketplace was too concerned about eking out a living to get involved. These philosophies seldom filtered down to the world of blood, sweat, and tears. Nevertheless, these philosophies did influence some Christian thinking and some converts brought into their new faith faulty mental concepts framed by these pagan ideas. Many false teachers had wedded some misinterpreted Scriptural concepts with Greek philosophy and had penetrated the churches with their intellectual message. Several Epistles were written to warn believers about the errors of this syncretism (e.g. Colossians, I John, and Jude). Paul admonished: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). He claimed that although the Greeks desired to hear human wisdom he would continue to exalt the cross (I Cor. 1:22-23).

The philosophies had many forms and emphases. Gnosticism (Greek *gnosis* means "knowledge") deprecated the value of the material world and exalted the soul or mind. At death the soul was released from the prison of the body. Since the body was temporary, it could be dissipated through lustful use or its appetites could be starved in order to fulfill the wishes of the mind. The beginnings of pseudo-Christian, Gnostic heresies can be seen in the background of Colossians and I John. Such a philosophy would naturally deny the creation of the material universe by God directly, the incarnation of Christ, His bodily resurrection, the residence of God within the believer's body, and the bodily resurrection of all men. In this system, salvation was gained through knowledge by an elite few with no attention given to sin, guilt, and faith.

The Stoics and the Epicureans were two opposing groups of philosophers (Acts 17:18). Stoicism, begun by Zeno (340-265 B.C.), taught that the world was governed by rational purpose, not by chance, although it denied the existence of a personal God who created and superintended the world. The goal of man was to adjust himself to that purpose. This belief in fate developed self-control and a high level of morality among its adherents. On the other hand, Epicureanism, begun by Epicurus (342-271 B.C.), believed that the world came into being by chance through the cosmic collision of atoms. Since there was no purpose, there

was no absolute good. The pursuit of pleasure, not truth, became the quest of man. Whatever brought happiness and satisfaction and removed pain was to be embraced.

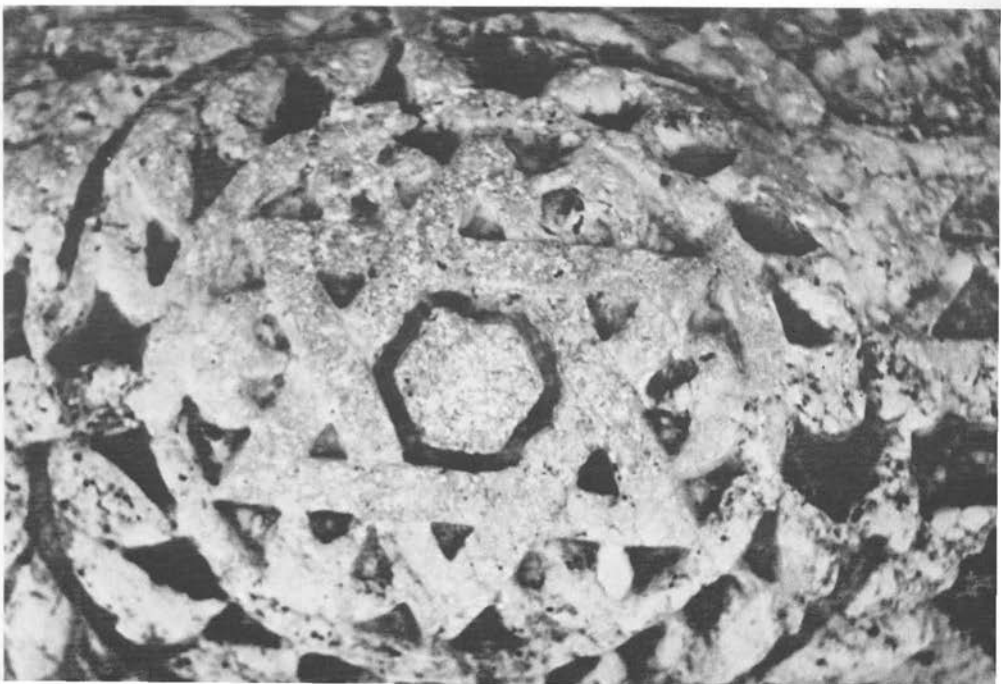
The influence of Platonism, cynicism, and skepticism was evident in some pockets of society. Cynics were the beatniks of the first century. They reacted to the economic pursuits of society, believing that the highest goal was to have no human wants or desires. Skeptics denied the reality of absolutes and claimed that everything was relative. The latter dealt with beliefs; the former more with behavior patterns. Platonism denied the reality of the material universe, seeing it only as a mental copy of the real world of ideas.

All of these attempts for truth began and ended with man. In none of these systems was there any place for oral or written revelation from a God who controlled history and the destinies of men.

Jewish

The Jewish concept was just the opposite. The Jews believed in a personal God who had revealed Himself through miraculous interventions into history, in oral pronouncements of divinely authenticated prophets, and in inscripturated truth. To them, the Old Testament was not a collection of ancient religious literature; rather, it was the Word of God, the basis of their morality, religious observances, and civil government. Their Bible consisted of the Law, Prophets, and Writings. This threefold division did not represent three degrees of inspiration or three periods of canonization. Actually, the cause of this division is unknown. Many

Detail of a stone carving of the six-pointed "Star of David," found at Capernaum.



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CHART OF THE HEBREW CANON			
Law	Genesis Exodus Leviticus	Numbers Deuteronomy	
Prophets (eight books)	Former Prophets (four) Joshua Judges Samuel Kings	Latter Prophets (four) Major (three) Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Minor (one)* Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah	Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi
Writings (eleven books)	Poetical (three) Psalms Proverbs Job	Five Rolls (five) Song of Solomon Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther	Historical (three) Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles
*The twelve minor prophets were regarded as one book, called "The Twelve."			

evangelicals believe that the divisions developed out of liturgical use in the synagogues; whereas others think that the Law was written by Moses, the pattern for all future prophets, that the Prophets were composed by men who had both the prophetic office and gift, and that the third section of Writings was penned by men who had the prophetic gift but not the office.⁴ The Hebrew canon consisted of twenty-two or twenty-four books,⁵ corresponding to the present thirty-nine.

Since Christianity was an extension of God's program through Israel, the early church also accepted the Old Testament as its authoritative

4. For example, David's office was that of king, but God enabled him to prophesy.

5. Some joined Lamentations to Jeremiah and Ruth to Judges.

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basis of faith and practice. In time, the New Testament books were added one by one to the growing canon. Christ's teaching was saturated with direct quotations and allusions to the Old Testament. He declared it to be final, authoritative, infallible, and irrevocable (Matt. 5:18; John 10:35). The New Testament books are full of references to it. The apostles equated "The Scripture says" with "God says" (Gal. 3:8), identified the word of the prophets with the word of God (Acts 4:24-25; cf. Ps. 2:1; Acts 28:25), and regarded their own writings as equal in authority with the old canon (I Tim. 5:18; II Peter 3:16).

Neither Israel nor the Church accepted the apocrypha as canonical. These books contain romantic tales, philosophical proverbs, devotional expressions, and historical data. Not once did a New Testament writer quote from them. They are full of historical, chronological, geographical and doctrinal errors. Jesus (Luke 24:44), Philo (A.D. 40), Josephus (A.D. 90) and the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus (130 B.C) all referred to a threefold division of the Old Testament canon, not a fourfold one. Although included in the Septuagint, they were not elevated to the status of Scripture until the Roman Catholic Church did so at the Council of Trent (A.D. 1545-1546). These fifteen books were apparently written about 300 B.C.—A.D. 100:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Wisdom of Solomon | 9. Baruch |
| 2. Ecclesiasticus | 10. Letter of Jeremiah |
| 3. Tobit | 11. Additions to Esther |
| 4. Judith | 12. Prayer of Azariah or
Song of Three Young Men |
| 5. I Esdras | 13. Susanna |
| 6. II Esdras | 14. Bel and the Dragon |
| 7. I Maccabees | 15. Prayer of Manasseh |
| 8. II Maccabees | |

Of these, three were not given canonical status (I Esdras, II Esdras, and Prayer of Manasseh). The remaining eleven were so combined that the net addition to the Catholic Douay Version was seven: Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah were made one; the additions to Esther were added to the canonical Esther; the Prayer of Azariah was inserted between the canonical Daniel 3:23 and 3:24, making it 3:24-90; and both Susanna and Bel and the Dragon were added to Daniel as chapters thirteen and fourteen respectively.

In circulation during the New Testament era were also pseudepigraphal books, sometimes called apocalyptic literature. They were so named because they bore the names of authoritative Old Testament figures long deceased and because they were designed to encourage the Jewish populace to endure persecution until God's messianic kingdom was established.

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They were more removed from canonical status than even the apocrypha. Here is their listing:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Assumption of Moses | 10. Martyrdom of Isaiah |
| 2. II Baruch | 11. III Maccabees |
| 3. III Baruch | 12. IV Maccabees |
| 4. I Enoch | 13. Paralipomena of Jeremiah |
| 5. II Enoch | 14. Psalms of Solomon |
| 6. Jubilees | 15. Sibylline Oracles |
| 7. Letter of Aristeeas | 16. Testament of Job |
| 8. Life of Adam and Eve | 17. Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs |
| 9. Lives of the Prophets | |

Two of these (Assumption of Moses and Enoch) were quoted in the book of Jude (vv. 9, 14-15). Mere quotation, however, does not establish the authenticity of all of their content.⁶

The obedience of the Jew to the Book was centered in two places of worship: the synagogue and the temple. Although not mentioned in the Old Testament, the synagogue was at the center of Jewish life in New Testament times (Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31; 6:6; 13:10; Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). Synagogues were not only in Palestine; they also existed throughout the Roman world. James observed: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). It is difficult to determine whether the first synagogue was organized during the Babylonian captivity, in the postexilic testamental period, or during the intertestamental era, although the first option seems most logical because the need for congregated fellowship, instruction, and worship existed among the exiles. Synagogues could only be started when there were at least ten adult Jewish males in the community. The buildings were preferably located outside the cities and near rivers or lakes in order to facilitate proselyte baptism. In structure they were simple. Generally rectangular, they contained an elevated platform where the reading desk was located, a chest or closet which housed copies of the law and other canonical literature, lamps for lighting, and benches for the congregation. The elders of the community voted for one to become "the ruler of the synagogue" (e.g., Jairus; Mark 5:22). His responsibilities were to preside over the meetings, to introduce visitors (Acts 13:15), to arbitrate disputes (Luke 13:14), to appoint those who would read the Scripture and pray, and to select those who would preach. Either he or an assistant, the synagogue attendant (*hazzan*), was in charge of the physical care of the building. In addition, the attendant blew the

6. See discussion under Jude.

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trumpet to announce the beginning and end of the Sabbath day, lit the lamps, removed and returned the scrolls to the chest, and sometimes served as principal of the synagogue school. The order of service rarely varied and usually included the recitation of the *Shema* or doctrinal creed (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41) with benediction both before and after, a prayer, the reading of the Law, the reading of the Prophets, a sermon or discourse, and the final blessing or benediction. Often guests were invited to bring the message (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14-15). This provided the apostles choice opportunities to show the fulfillment of the prophetic hopes in Christ. Quite often they were invited back for several Sabbaths to continue their exposition (Acts 13:42).

The synagogue was the center of instruction, but the temple was the place of sacrifice. There were many synagogues, but there was only one temple. The first temple, built by Solomon (949 B.C.), was destroyed by the Babylonians (586 B.C.). Under the combined leadership of Zerubabel, Haggai, and Zechariah, a second temple was constructed after many labor setbacks (516-515 B.C.). The Talmud states that five key items from the first temple were absent from the second: the ark of the covenant, the Shekinah cloud of glory, the divine fire, the Holy Spirit, and the Urim and Thummim. This second edifice was plundered by Antiochus Epiphanes and defiled when a pagan altar was erected in its midst (168 B.C.). Shortly after, it was recovered, cleansed, and fortified by Judas Maccabeus. It was seized by Pompey and the Romans (63 B.C.) and subsequently by Herod the Great (37 B.C.). Herod began a renovation program of enlargement and beautification in the eighteenth year of his reign (20-19 B.C.). Work on the temple proper was completed by the priests in a year and a half; the courts were finished in eight years. Auxiliary buildings were constantly being added up to the reigns of Herod Agrippa II and Albinus (A.D. 64). The work had been in operation for forty-six years (John 2:20) when Jesus first cleansed it.

Its architectural specifications can be gleaned from the writings of Josephus and the Talmud. The temple area covered about twenty-six acres. The main building and its courts were arranged in terraces, with the temple found on the highest one. Thus the temple was clearly visible to all within the city of Jerusalem and to those outside with an unobstructed view of the city. The outer court, known as the court of the Gentiles, was frequented by Gentiles, unclean persons, and merchants. It was surrounded by a high wall with several gates on the western side and porticoes all around it. This was probably the area in which the money exchangers and the sellers of sacrificial animals were located. On the inner side was a rampart surrounded with a stone parapet which also formed the outer boundary of the inner temple area. A short distance away from the rampart was a wall which surrounded

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Herodian Jerusalem (a model) including the temple area in the background.

the temple and the inner courts. Through the eastern gate of this wall one could enter into the court of the women. This gate, higher and wider than the eight others, was made of Corinthian brass and probably was known as the "Beautiful Gate" (Acts 3:2). A wall separated the court of the women from the court of the Israelites. Within the court of the Israelites was the court of the priests with the temple sanctuary. Within the court of the priests was the altar of sacrifice and the laver. The temple was on a terrace, twelve steps higher than the inner court. It was built upon massive blocks of white marble, gilded with gold decorations both inside and out. The temple was divided into two sections: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Holy Place was sixty feet long, thirty feet wide, and ninety feet high. It contained one golden candlestick, a table of showbread, and an altar of incense. The Holy of Holies was thirty feet long, thirty feet wide, and ninety feet high. It did not contain any furniture because the ark of the covenant disappeared during the time of the Babylonian invasion. A wooden partition and a thick double veil separated the two holy places.

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Only during the religious feasts did large numbers of people come to the temple area. It was designed for sacrificial ceremonies, not for congregational worship. However, individuals could go there for prayer (Luke 2:37; 18:10). Some teaching occurred there when a leading rabbi was present (cf. Luke 20:1). The priests were permitted by the Romans to maintain a police force to guard the inner sanctuary, to keep unauthorized persons out of certain designated areas (e.g., Gentiles out of the inner court), and to maintain order in the courts (Matt. 26:47; Acts 4:1; 5:24-26). This force, led by Judas, may have arrested Christ in Gethsemane and removed Him to the house of Annas.

Jewish religious observances were based upon the directives of the Old Testament. The Sabbath, or the seventh day of the week, was to be kept holy through rest and instruction in the Law (Exod. 20:6-11). In defining work, the scribes had imposed upon the Sabbath such strict regulations that works of compassion and necessity were ruled out. This led to their criticism of Jesus' actions and to their claim that He had broken the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14; 23:2-4). The religious calendar was marked by these feasts:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Scripture</i>
April 14	Passover	Exod. 12:1-20; Lev. 23:5
April 15	Unleavened Bread	Lev. 23:6-8
June 6	Pentecost	Lev. 23:15-21
October 1	Trumpets	Lev. 23:23-25
October 10	Atonement	Lev. 23:26-32
October 15	Tabernacles	Lev. 23:33-44
December 25	Dedication	John 10:22
March 14	Purim	Esther 9:26-28

The religious year began with Passover, whereas the civil year began with the Feast of Trumpets. The first six feasts were ordered by God through Moses; Purim began after the Babylonian captivity in the post-exile era; and the Feast of Dedication started in the intertestamental period. The feasts were holy, patriotic seasons in which the people were reminded of their national heritage and the works of God in their behalf.

The Feast of Passover was the oldest and most important. It was their "Independence Day" (cf. our July 4). It commemorated their deliverance from Egyptian bondage under the leadership of Moses (Exod. 12:1-28), an event that marked the beginning of their national life through the redemptive purpose of God. It became identified with the Feast of Unleavened Bread to form an eight-day festival, known sometimes as the days of unleavened bread or merely as Passover (Matt. 26:2, 17). As a youth, Christ attended this feast in Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-52).

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In His ministry He cleansed the temple during Passover (John 2:13-17), and He was crucified during that season (cf. I Cor. 5:7). Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles formed the three great annual festivals.

Pentecost (Exod. 23:16; Lev. 23:15-22; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12) was also known as the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Weeks, and the Day of First Fruits. It occurred fifty days after Passover. It marked the anniversary of the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai and a thanksgiving for the conclusion of the harvest. During the observance, loaves of bread were made from the recently harvested grain and offered to God on the altar. Not mentioned in the Gospels, it holds significance because on the Day of Pentecost that followed Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Spirit descended in fulfillment of Christ's pledge (Acts 2:1).

The Feast of Trumpets, or *Rosh Hashanah*, marked the beginning of the Jewish New Year (cf. our Jan. 1) or crop year. It came after the harvest of the previous year and before the sowing of the crops for the new year. It was celebrated with the blowing of trumpets and horns in the temple from morning to evening. Since it was not a required feast, most Jews stayed at home and observed it in the synagogues rather than at the Jerusalem temple. This feast is not mentioned in the New Testament.

The Day of Atonement, perhaps the most sacred holy day for the pious Jew, was the day appointed for a yearly, general, and perfect expiation for all those unatoned, uncleansed sins of the past year. It was a day during which the nation of Israel was reconciled to God. It became a day of fasting for the people, a period devoted entirely to confession, repentance, and prayer (Acts 27:9). On this day only did the high priest enter the Holy of Holies, taking the blood of the sin offering with him. This day provided the historical and theological background against which the Book of Hebrews contrasts the priestly work of Christ.

The third of the great annual feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles, was an eight-day festival that began just five days after the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:36; Deut. 16:13; Ezek. 45:25; Neh. 8:18). It was also known as the Festival of Tents, the Feast of Ingathering, and the Festival of Jehovah. It commemorated the forty years of wilderness wanderings during which their ancestors lived in tents. It also was an expression of thanksgiving for the ingathering of the harvest and fruits. During the week, the people lived in handmade booths in imitation of their forefathers' experience. On the last day of the feast (John 7:37), two outstanding ceremonies occurred. The first was the lighting of a great candelabra in the court of the women; this symbolized the pillar of fire which led Israel by night (Exod. 13:21). The second involved a

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procession that brought a pitcher of water from the pool of Siloam. This water was then poured out at the foot of the altar in the court of the priests; this action symbolized the two times when God gave Israel water out of the rock (Exod. 17:5-6; Num. 20:11). This feast formed the background for Jesus' debate with His critics and for two of His major sermons (John 7:2—8:59).

The Feast of Dedication, also known as the Feast of Lights or *Hanukkah*, had its origin in the Maccabean period. It commemorates that time when Judas Maccabeus delivered Jerusalem from the Syrians and reopened, cleansed, and rededicated the temple (164 B.C.). Tradition states that the oil supply for the temple lampstand, enough for only one day, lasted for eight days; thus, an eight-day festival was established. Corresponding to the Christian Christmas, it was celebrated by the brilliant lighting of Jewish houses and the temple area. Today, exchange of gifts is also involved. Jesus apparently attended one of these feasts (John 10:22-39).

The Feast of Purim⁷ remembered the exploits of Esther and Mordecai in delivering the Jews from the plot of the Persian Haman to exterminate them (Esther 9:20-32). During the two-day feast, the entire Book of Esther was read publicly in the synagogue. Some scholars detect one possible reference to this feast in the New Testament (cf. John 5:1).

Although New Testament Judaism had one Book, one temple, and one sacred calendar, there were many religious and political sects with differing beliefs and practices. The strict, conservative element was the Pharisees. The title means "separated ones." Some have traced their origin to the postexilic period when Israel separated itself from the heathen of the land under the influence of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 6:21; 9:1; 10:11; Neh. 9:2; 10:28). Most, however, identify them with the Hasidim of the Hasmonean period, a group that resisted the Hellenization of Jewish life. They placed great emphasis on a strict observance of the law, equated the tradition of the elders or the scribal interpretations of the law with the Mosaic law itself, and regarded themselves as very righteous and others as sinners (Luke 18:11-12). They religiously prayed, fasted, tithed, and observed the weekly Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-2; 23:23; Luke 11:42). They believed in the existence of angels, in life after death, and in the resurrection of the body (Acts 23:6, 8; 24:15). They were involved in the conspiracy to put Christ to death.

The liberal religious sect was the Sadducees, the archenemy of the Pharisaical party. The origin of their name is debatable. Some have

7. A Hebrew word meaning "lots." This title was attached to the feast because Haman cast lots to determine when he should carry out the decree to massacre the Jews within Persia (Esther 9:24).

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traced it to Zadok, the priest who was faithful to David and Solomon when Abiathar, another priest, defected to Adonijah (I Kings 1:32-43); others link it to the sons of Zadok who were the priestly powers during the exile (II Chron. 31:10; Ezek. 40:46). Others feel that the linguistic parent is a Hebrew word meaning "righteous" or "desolation." In any case, the doctrines of the Sadducees were more important than the derivation of the name. They accepted the Law as final authority, placing it above even the Prophets and the Writings. They took the Law literally, rejecting the allegorical interpretations of the Pharisees and the scribal traditions. However, they denied the existence of angels, the immortality of the spirit, and the resurrection of the body (Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:8). In their antisupernaturalistic rationalism, they absorbed many Greek philosophical concepts into their belief. Most of the priests belonged to the Sadducees; therefore, the latter enjoyed much political power in New Testament times. With the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), their power and existence died.

Scribes probably first appeared during the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 7:6). Initially, they were professional copyists of the law. The more they copied the more they came to know about the Scriptures. Soon they developed into the teachers and interpreters of the law. Whenever a case developed with no direct Scripture bearing upon its solution, they passed an oral judgment upon the situation. They later communicated this oral, traditional law to their pupils. In their teaching they always referred to the judgments of past, learned rabbis (Matt. 7:28-29). Other names for this group included lawyers, jurists, teachers of the law, and rabbis (Matt. 22:35; Luke 5:17; 7:30; 10:25; 11:45, 52; 14:3; Acts 5:34). The most learned of them became the "doctors of the law." Most scribes belonged to or were sympathetic to the Pharisees.

The Herodians (Matt. 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13) were an influential political group, composed mainly of the aristocratic, Sadducean priests that supported the Herodian dynasty and Roman rule in Palestine. Greatly opposed to the Pharisees, they nevertheless joined with them in a common effort to crucify Christ.

The Sanhedrin originated during the Greek period of occupation, although many rabbis traced its beginning to the council of seventy elders named by Moses. In New Testament times it was the Jewish supreme court. Biblical writers named it by these terms: "rulers," "chief priests and rulers," "chief priests and elders and scribes," and "council." The high priest presided over a membership of seventy, consisting of high priests, members of families from which the high priests came, tribal and family heads, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees (Matt. 26:3, 57, 59; Mark 14:53; 15:1; Luke 22:66; Acts 4:5; 22:30). Council sessions were not held at night, on the Sabbath, or during the various

religious feasts. They normally met in the temple area daily, although some claim that they congregated only on Monday and Thursday. In religious cases they had the power to impose and to execute the death sentence upon Gentiles who trespassed into unauthorized temple courts and upon Jews who invited Gentiles into the Jewish temple areas. In civil cases their verdicts of capital punishment had to be referred to the Roman procurator for execution. Christ appeared before the Sanhedrin on a charge of blasphemy (Matt. 26:65). The council also heard the charges against Peter and John (Acts 4:5, 6; 5:27), against Stephen (Acts 6:13), and against Paul (Acts 23:1). It controlled a police force that could make arrests (Matt. 26:47; Mark 14:43; Acts 4:3; 5:17-18). It even had the power to issue warrants to the synagogues of Damascus for the seizure of Christians in their midst (Acts 9:2; 22:5; 26:12).

Although not mentioned in the Gospels, the Essenes were a well-known sect in the time of Jesus. They formed a monastic community on the western shore of the Dead Sea near Engedi. Organization was strict with unconditional obedience demanded of its members. Three years of probation were required before full membership was granted. Since they abstained from marriage, converts came through adoption of others' children or proselytization. Pure communal living was practiced: common food, meals, clothes, and treasury. Since trading was forbidden, they

Ruins of the domestic sections of the Qumran community. A mill for grinding grain is in the foreground.





The sheer east slope of Masada rock, the site of Herod's famed fortress by the Dead Sea.

engaged in agriculture and crafts to support themselves. Furthermore, they repudiated slavery, swearing, and anointing with oil; bathed in cold water before each meal; practiced modesty at all times, and wore white clothing. They had not only withdrawn from a Roman-controlled society, but they also refused to offer sacrifices at the temple because they believed that the priests were corrupt. Instead, they sent gifts of incense to the temple. They were far more legalistic than the Pharisees. Some have conjectured that either Jesus or John the Baptist (or both) had been influenced by the Essenes, but there is no objective, Scriptural proof that this happened. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 led to the disclosure of the Qumran community on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Scholars have debated whether the Qumran community belonged to the Essene sect. There are both similarities and differences between their respective beliefs and practices. If they were not identical, then they probably were two branches of the same ascetic sect.

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The Zealots were political revolutionaries. Committed to the overthrow of Roman rule, they refused to pay taxes and started frequent revolts (cf. Acts 21:38). Barabbas was probably one (Mark 15:7). One of Jesus' disciples, Simon, was a converted political revolutionary (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Their strength was located in Galilee and in other remote areas. Their power came to an abrupt end in the Jewish War (A.D. 66-73) at the infamous siege of Masada.

As a result of the Assyrian (722 B.C.) and the Babylonian (586 B.C.) conquests of Palestine, Jews were scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. They were divided into two groups: the Hebraists and the Hellenists. The Hebraists were Jews who were committed to orthodox Judaism, and who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and closely followed Hebrew rituals (e.g., Paul; Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:5). On the other hand, the Hellenists were those Jews who continued to embrace the faith of Judaism but who adopted the customs of their Gentile neighbors.

Increase Your Learning

By Discussing

1. Should history be called "His Story"?
How can God carry out His plan for the ages without the violation of human freedom?
2. Contrast the social and economic conditions of the first century with those of the present.
3. Do any contemporary religious and philosophical movements have counterparts in the first century? Do men think and worship any differently today?
4. What can evangelicals learn from the various religious sects that existed within first-century Judaism?

By Reading

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